

## **Special Edition: Edgefield County Council Chairman's State of the County Report January 3, 2014**

This special edition of the Edgefield County Chairman's Update is a State of the County report. I committed to you that I would continue to communicate the County's activities. This report, just like my other monthly newsletters, is designed to bring information directly to you.

First, nothing the County does is possible without the work of many people. From the County Council, I'd like to thank Vice Chair Genia Blackwell, Rodney Ashcraft, Betty Butler and Norman Dorn. We also owe a debt of gratitude for the County Staff, Department Heads, Elected Officials, and our many volunteers who serve on Committees and Boards, all of whom help us move Edgefield County smartly into the future.

I also thank you, the citizens, for continuing to help us steer the ship. Your input, advice and ideas really do make a difference.

### **Putting it in perspective**

This report only contains highlights of County-wide work. There are many other achievements we were able to accomplish as a team. To see them all, go to the County website and read through the minutes for each meeting this year. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised.

Many of the items you'll see in this report stem from the Strategic Plan, approved by County Council in 2012 and updated last year. This Plan represents some bold steps to begin laying the groundwork for Edgefield County's future growth. And we are taking those steps now. In other words, this is one Plan we are not allowing to collect dust!

Make no mistake about it: Edgefield County is putting into place many new policies, programs and actions to make our County one of South Carolina's best counties.

One action from last year I want to highlight: We did not raise your taxes. We have not raised taxes since 2010. That's the kind of action you want to see from us!

### **Looking at the big items**

There's no question that the proposed location for an animal shelter took a lot of time during the year. However, Council decided last month to locate the facility off Simmons Road in Edgefield. The construction of the shelter will likely pay for itself in 6-7 years, based on what it now costs to take our animals to the Aiken County Animal Shelter. Construction of our animal shelter should begin soon.

Speaking of building, the County Council also passed last year a \$1.2 million bond that will allow renovations to the rest of the Kneece Building and will also help renovate the newly acquired Sweetwater Community Center.

We also put into place a Committee to start working on the proposed 1 Cent Capital Sales Tax. This Committee will be seeking public input on what kinds of projects you want a 1 cent sales tax spent on. The Committee will report to Council by April 1. If Council accepts their recommendation, the tax and the projects will be on the ballot for voters' approval in November. In other words, it will be up to you, the citizens, to decide if you'd like to fund projects. One important note: If you have a question on this potential tax, please ask us! Rest assured, we will be communicating with you often on what these project are so you can make an informed decision.

In economic development, we held the County's first Summit, called Elevating Edgefield County. This Summit brought together citizens, elected officials and community leaders, all who listened to a nationally recognized guest speaker discuss how counties like ours can prosper. The group then gave their input on how they'd like to address current and future economic development needs in our Strategic Plan. That information was given to the County's Economic Development Committee, which proposed some goals that were accepted by Council. And we will be working to execute those goals.

### **Understanding other work**

Some other highlights that are significant and worth noting:

- The County Council added two new deputies to the Sheriff's Department, bringing the total number of deputies approved the last two years to 4;
- Worked on land development issues, from rezoning land for future economic development to expanding a Highway Overlay to 7 miles of Hwy. 25 to prepare that corridor for future growth;
- Received several grant awards in 2013, totaling more than \$200,000;
- Improved infrastructure in the County by paving seven county roads through the County Transportation Committee;
- The County Council provided a 2% increase in salaries for County employees, the first increase for them in two years;
- A new ambulance was approved, which will make the third the County will purchase in less than two years to update the aging fleet of ambulances;
- Provided money necessary to split Trenton's voting district into two in order to reduce the long lines during elections and two voting districts in Edgefield were combined; and
- Made the Emergency Management Director's position a full-time job, as required by state law.

There's still plenty left to do, of course.

I hope it is obvious to you that County Government is looking directly at the future of our County and its citizens. We make every decision with citizens in mind. Please let County Council or County Government staff know your opinion on any issue. Together, we can become South Carolina's best place to live and work.

Happy New Year!

Until next time,

Dean Campbell

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### **How This Update Works**

As Chairman of Edgefield County Council, I use this newsletter to help explain County issues and try to answer questions from citizens. We will protect the email addresses of those who are interested in receiving this newsletter.

I'd like to send this newsletter to you at least monthly, depending on issues upcoming or ongoing, or if issues need more explanation.

Finally, if you have a question about an issue, please reply to me. I'll be happy to try to answer your question.